

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

August 4, 2005

The Honorable Anthony J. Principi
Chairman
Base Realignment and Closure Commission
2521 South Clark Street
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Secretary Principi:

We are writing to reiterate our strong support for the Maryland Air National Guard and to urge the Commission to set aside the Air Force recommendation to remove all eight C-130J aircraft currently based at Martin State Air Base (MSA). We believe the proposal is based on incorrect data that understates the military value of Martin State Airport and does not take into consideration the important role played by the 135th Airlift Group (AG) in protecting the National Capital Region (NCR).

The Air Force recommendation would strip all tactical airlift aircraft currently supporting the National Capital Region, the Military District of Washington, and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region III. Should the 135th Airlift Group move, as proposed, the next closest asset with legal authority to respond in civil matters would be in 210 miles away in Ohio. Given the unique security environment this region faces, we do not support any effort that would weaken our ability to respond to emergencies.

The 135th Airlift Group is part of on-going "First Responder" and "Emergency Mission Reconstitution" programs to provide evacuation and reconstitution capabilities to national security agencies in the event of an emergency in the National Capital Region. It is also part of reciprocal support agreements with the Joint Force Headquarters of Virginia and Washington, DC to ensure Homeland Defense and civil support in times of crisis.

We are also concerned that this recommendation is based on inaccurate data relating to the physical assets available at Martin State Air Base. Analysis of the Military Value of MSA was based on the shortest runway distance available, rather than using the longest available landing distance. Two landing zones and five drop zones at Martin State were not even included in the Air Force analysis. Correcting these errors raises the Military Value score for Martin State Airport, reflecting the important contributions this facility makes today – and can continue to make – to the Air Force mission in the National Capital Region.

Secretary Principi
August 4, 2005
Page 2

We hope you will give strong consideration to rejecting the Air Force recommendation on the Maryland Air National Guard. The unique assets and location of the 135th Air Group make it an invaluable component of the military defense of the National Capital Region, and one which must not be lost.

Thank you for considering our concerns on this important issue. We look forward to working with you as the Commission continues to examine the BRAC recommendations.

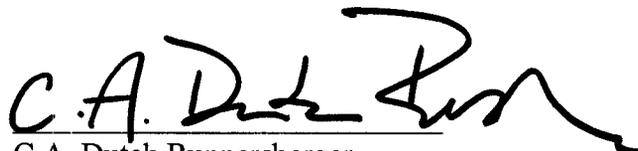
Sincerely,



Senator Paul S. Sarbanes
United States Senator



Senator Barbara A. Mikulski
United States Senator



C.A. Dutch Ruppensberger
Member of Congress